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I hereby declare that the short synopsis " **AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INDIA ASEAN RELATIONS (FROM 2000-2024)**" being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **POLITICAL SCIENCE** under **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES** of U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj during the academic year **2023**.

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"AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INDIA ASEAN RELATIONS (FROM 2000-2024)"

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

to

U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st century, focusing on its geopolitical, economic, and security contributions in perspective of India ASEAN Relations. Through a qualitative case study approach, it analyzes India's Act East Policy, Quad participation, naval capabilities, and soft power diplomacy. The research evaluates India's role in fostering a rules-based order amidst great power rivalry, particularly with China and the USA. Expected outcomes include policy recommendations for enhancing India's regional influence and maritime security. By addressing gaps in economic integration and strategic partnerships, the study contributes to understanding India's pivotal role in Indo-Pacific stability.

keywords

Indo-Pacific, India, geopolitics, maritime security, Act East Policy, Quad, soft power, regional stability.

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Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region, spanning the vast expanse of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, has emerged as a critical geopolitical and geo economic arena in the 21st century. Encompassing key maritime routes like the Malacca Strait, which facilitates 60% of global trade, the region is a nexus of economic prosperity and strategic competition. India, strategically positioned at the heart of the Indian Ocean, has transitioned from a peripheral player to a central actor in shaping the Indo-Pacific's future. Its growing economic clout, military modernization, and diplomatic initiatives position it as a counterbalance to rising powers and a proponent of a free and open regional order.

India's strategic importance is driven by several factors: its geographic centrality, connecting Asia with Africa and Australia; its robust economic growth, projected to make it the world's third-largest economy by 2030; and its evolving foreign policy, exemplified by the Act East Policy and participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). The Act East Policy, launched in 2014, has deepened India's engagement with ASEAN nations, Japan, and Australia, while the Quad underscores its alignment with democratic powers to counter China's assertiveness. However, India faces challenges, including China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), maritime security threats like piracy, and the need to balance strategic autonomy with global alliances.

This study explores India's multifaceted role in the Indo-Pacific, examining its geopolitical strategies, economic contributions, naval capabilities, and soft power diplomacy. It addresses a critical gap in understanding how India navigates great power rivalry while fostering regional stability. By analyzing primary sources like policy documents and secondary sources like scholarly works, the research aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of India's influence. The significance lies in informing policymakers, scholars, and practitioners about India's strategic priorities,

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contributing to global discourse on multipolarity and regional governance. This study aligns with India's vision of a rules-based Indo-Pacific, offering insights into its potential as a regional leader.

Literature Review

The Indo-Pacific has garnered significant scholarly attention as a geopolitical construct, reflecting shifts in global power dynamics. Kaplan (2010) frames the Indian Ocean as a historical and strategic fulcrum, emphasizing India's geographic advantage but lacking analysis of its modern policy frameworks. Med calf (2020) conceptualizes the Indo-Pacific as a contested space, highlighting India's role in the Quad but underemphasizing its bilateral ties with smaller nations like Sri Lanka or Indonesia. Brewster (2016) explores India's naval ambitions, arguing that resource constraints limit its power projection, yet overlooks its soft power initiatives, such as cultural diplomacy through Indian diaspora networks.

Pant and Joshi (2021) analyze India's Act East Policy, noting its success in forging economic and security ties with Vietnam and Singapore but highlighting gaps in competing with China's economic influence. Chacko (2018) critiques India's strategic autonomy, suggesting tensions between its non-aligned heritage and Quad commitments. Raja Mohan (2013) examines India's maritime doctrine, arguing it aligns with a free and open Indo-Pacific but requires enhanced naval infrastructure. Recent works, such as Singh (2024) in Strategic Analysis, emphasize India's counter-strategy to China's maritime expansion but lack focus on non-traditional security threats like climate change.

Emerging literature, such as Gupta and Sharma (2025) in Journal of Indo-Pacific Studies, underscores India's role in regional connectivity projects like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), yet fails to integrate economic and security dimensions holistically. Studies on India's soft power, such as Nair (2023) in South

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Asian Review, highlight its cultural exports (e.g., Bollywood, yoga) but do not connect these to geopolitical strategy. The literature reveals three key gaps: limited integration of India's economic, security, and cultural roles; insufficient focus on its partnerships with smaller Indo-Pacific states; and underexplored implications of non-traditional threats like climate-induced migration.

This study addresses these gaps by synthesizing India's geopolitical strategies (e.g., Quad, Act East), economic initiatives (e.g., AAGC), naval capabilities, and soft power diplomacy. It offers a multidimensional perspective, analyzing how India balances great power dynamics with regional cooperation. By drawing on recent policy shifts and primary data, the research contributes a fresh narrative to Indo-Pacific scholarship, avoiding duplication with existing studies in Shodh Gangotri.

Description of Broad Area

The research is situated within International Relations, specifically the subfields of geopolitics, maritime security, and regional economic integration in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific, extending from East Africa to the Western Pacific, is a dynamic region hosting critical sea lanes, such as the South China Sea and Malacca Strait, which account for 60% of global maritime trade and 80% of energy flows. India's strategic location, bridging the Indian Ocean with Asia, positions it as a pivotal player in this geopolitical theater, where great power rivalry, economic interdependence, and security challenges converge.

The study examines India's role through four lenses: geopolitical influence, via initiatives like the Act East Policy and Quad; economic engagement, through trade agreements and connectivity projects; maritime security, focusing on naval modernization and anti-piracy efforts; and soft power, leveraging cultural and diaspora networks. It explores how India navigates China's BRI, strengthens ties with ASEAN, and addresses non-traditional threats like climate change and illegal

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fishing. The research also considers India's strategic partnerships with Japan, Australia, and smaller states like the Maldives, which enhance its regional influence.

This interdisciplinary approach draws from political science, strategic studies, and economic diplomacy, offering insights into India's role in a multipolar world. The study's relevance lies in its contribution to understanding India's leadership in fostering a rules-based Indo-Pacific order, addressing both traditional and emerging challenges. By examining India's strategic evolution since 2000, it provides a framework for policymakers to strengthen regional stability and economic cooperation.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1.Investigate India's geopolitical strategies, including the Act East Policy and Quad, in shaping Indo-Pacific regional dynamics.

2.Assess India's economic contributions to regional trade and connectivity initiatives, such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.

3.Evaluate India's naval modernization and maritime security role in promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific.

4.Explore India's soft power diplomacy, including cultural and diaspora networks, in strengthening ties with Indo-Pacific nations.

5.Analyze challenges and opportunities for India in navigating great power rivalry and fostering regional cooperation.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study employs a qualitative research design, using a case study approach to examine India's strategic role in the Indo-Pacific from 2000 to

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2025. The design allows for in-depth analysis of India's policies, supported by comparative analysis of its interactions with key players (e.g., USA, China, ASEAN).

Population and Sample: The study focuses on India's foreign policy initiatives, including the Act East Policy, Quad framework, SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), and bilateral ties with Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, and the Maldives. Purposive sampling ensures the selection of representative cases that capture India's geopolitical, economic, and security roles. These cases are chosen for their relevance to Indo-Pacific dynamics and data availability.

Data Collection:

Primary Sources:

Policy documents from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), such as annual reports (2020–2025) and Quad joint statements. Speeches by Indian leaders at forums like the Shangri-La Dialogue and Raisina Dialogue. Semi-structured interviews with 15–20 stakeholders, including diplomats, naval officers, and academic experts in India, Japan, and ASEAN countries. Interviews will be conducted via virtual platforms or in-person, with questions tailored to India's strategic priorities (e.g., "How does India balance Quad commitments with strategic autonomy?").

Secondary Sources:

Peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Strategic Analysis). Books by scholars like Raja Mohan and Pant. Reports from think tanks (e.g., ORF, Brookings India, Lowy Institute). Credible news sources (e.g., The Diplomat, Hindustan Times) for recent developments.Archival data from INFLIBNET and JSTOR for historical context.

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Data Analysis:

Thematic Analysis: Interview transcripts and policy documents will be coded using NVivo to identify themes like "strategic autonomy," "maritime security," and "regional connectivity." Coding will involve iterative categorization to ensure robustness.

Content Analysis: Speeches and policy texts will be analyzed to trace India's strategic narrative over time, identifying shifts in priorities (e.g., from Look East to Act East).

Comparative Analysis: India's strategies will be compared with China's BRI and the USA's Indo-Pacific Strategy to highlight unique contributions and challenges.

Triangulation: Combining primary (interviews, documents) and secondary (literature, reports) sources ensures validity and reduces bias.

Ethical Considerations: Participants will provide informed consent, with anonymity guaranteed where requested. Data will be securely stored on encrypted drives, and citations will adhere to APA 7th Edition to maintain academic integrity. The study avoids sensitive or classified information, focusing on publicly available data.

Scope and Limitations: The study covers India's role from 2000 to 2025, excluding pre-21st-century policies. Limitations include restricted access to classified defense data and potential biases in expert interviews. These will be mitigated through diverse sources and critical evaluation.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for its comprehensive analysis of India's strategic role in the Indo-Pacific, a region critical to global trade and security. By examining India's geopolitical, economic, and security contributions, it addresses a gap in integrating these dimensions, offering a holistic perspective. The study's findings will guide

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policymakers in strengthening India's regional leadership, particularly in countering China's influence and fostering ASEAN partnerships. It also informs scholars about India's evolving foreign policy, contributing to International Relations literature. By depositing the synopsis in Shodh Gangotri, the research ensures visibility and prevents duplication, aligning with INFLIBNET's mission to promote original scholarship. The study's focus on non-traditional threats like climate change adds relevance to global sustainability goals.

Expected Outcome of Research

The research will provide a nuanced understanding of India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific, highlighting its role as a geopolitical balancer, economic connector, and security provider. It is expected to reveal how India's Act East Policy and Quad engagement enhance its influence, while identifying gaps in naval capacity and economic integration. The study will propose a framework for leveraging India's soft power, particularly in ASEAN and Indian Ocean states, to strengthen regional ties. Key outcomes include:

- Policy recommendations for enhancing India's maritime security through naval modernization.
- Strategies for deepening economic connectivity via initiatives like AAGC.
- Insights into India's navigation of great power rivalry, balancing autonomy with alliances.
- Contributions to non-traditional security, such as climate resilience and anti-piracy measures.
- The findings will serve as a reference for policymakers and scholars, fostering informed strategies for a stable Indo-Pacific.

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Chapter Scheme

Introduction

Chapter 1: Diplomatic Relations between India and ASEAN

Chapter 2: Economic and Security Cooperation

Chapter 3: India's "Act East" Policy and Strategic Engagement with ASEAN

Chapter 4: ASEAN India Connectivity Initiatives

Chapter 5: Prospects and Challenges for India ASEAN Connectivity

Conclusion

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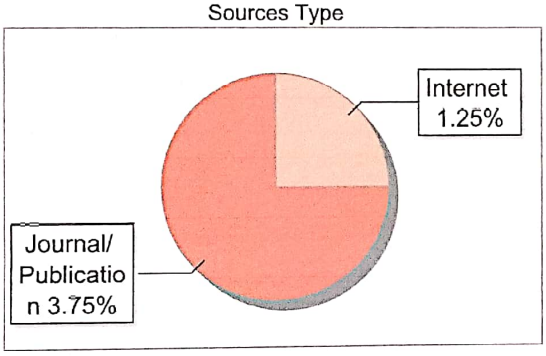

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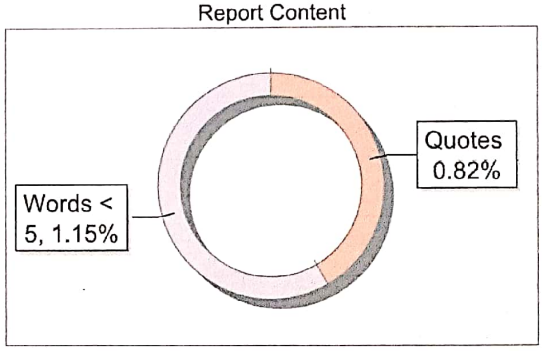

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